

Soldiers *Online*

St. Louis, Mo.

Arch Run Registration Opens

THE Second Army Arch Run Half-Marathon will be held on Armed Forces Day, May 19, said COL Timothy Cannon, commander of the U.S. Army Reserve Personnel Command.

Wheelchair athletes will start at 7:00 a.m., and runners and walkers will begin 15 minutes later. The cost is \$15 per person for registration made by May 15 and \$20 per person for registration made between May 16 and the day of the race. Registration can be made via the Internet at www.fleetfeetsports.com, in person or by mail to: Army Reserve Personnel Command, ATTN: Army Arch Run, 1 Reserve Way, St. Louis, MO 63132-5200.

Personal checks or money orders are accepted, and should be made payable to AR-PERSCOM MWR.

Registration by mail must be postmarked by May 14.

Awards will be given to the top three male and female finishers, and in 11 individual and nine team categories, including three military divisions. All participants will receive an Army Arch Run T-shirt and a certificate of participation.

The moderately hilly, 13.1-mile USA Track and Field-certified course starts in Overland, Mo., at the command headquarters in the Federal Records Center, 9700 Page Avenue. The course goes through some of St. Louis' most historic and scenic neighborhoods, and ends along the banks of the Mississippi River by the famous Gateway Arch.

Free parking is available at the start area and free bus transportation will be available to take participants from the finish area back to the start area.

The award ceremony will include a commemoration of the 10th anniversary of Opera-

tions Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and a salute to those veterans.

For more information about the Army Arch Run visit the web site at: www.2xcitizen.usar.army.mil/news/arch-run/index.htm, or contact Ray

Veterans Benefits

Home Loan Guarantee Improvements Extended

CONGRESS has extended two 1992 improvements to the Department of Veterans Affairs Home Loan Guarantee Program that were due to expire in 2001. One extension affects loan guarantees for reserve-component soldiers, while the other extension affects funding fees for active-duty members.

Congress passed legislation earlier this fiscal year that will allow National Guard and Reserve members to apply for the VA Home Loan Guarantee Program through December 2007. The 1992 legislation established the benefit but made it good only through 2001, said Keith Pedigo, director of the VA's Loan Guarantee Service.

"Because of the success of the program, Congress decided it would be appropriate to extend the eligibility of the Guard and Reserve," he said.

To be eligible, Guard members and Reservists must have at least six years' service in the Guard or Reserve, Pedigo said, but they need not be consecutive years.

Active-duty veterans buying their first homes have paid a funding fee of 2 percent of the loan amount since 1992, when Congress raised it from 1.25 percent. Pedigo said the increase was to expire in 2001, but a recent change extended it three years.

Active-duty veterans buying subsequent homes are unaffected — they pay a funding fee of 1.25 percent of the loan amount. Guard members and Reservists pay a 2.5 percent funding fee.

An improvement to the home loan guarantee program affects surviving spouses of service members who die of a service-connected disability. Pedigo said long-standing provisions give these surviving spouses eligibility for the program, but take it away permanently if the surviving spouse remarries.

He said surviving spouses didn't regain eligibility even if the subsequent marriage ended in divorce or the subsequent spouse died. The recent change provides for the surviving spouse to regain eligibility for the program if the subsequent marriage ends.

"They just need to be unmarried at the time the loan is made," Pedigo said.

For more information, visit the Department of Veterans Affairs homepage at www.va.gov. — American Forces Press Service



Gall at (314) 592-0000, ext. 3912, or **raymond.gall@arpstl.army.mil**. — *Army Reserve Personnel Command Public Affairs Office*

Washington, D.C.

Enacting Wills Gets Easier

A LITTLE-known provision of the 2001 Defense Authorization Act now makes it easier for the last wishes of service members to be carried out.

"This new law recognizes a special, uniform way to prove an individual's testamentary intent," said COL George Hancock, chief of the Army's legal assistance division.

At the heart of the change to "military testamentary instruments" — or wills — is a standard "self-proving affidavit" at the end of the will. The affidavit contains the service member's acknowledgment of the will and affidavits of the witnesses to the will.

"The affidavit indicates that the will was signed in accordance with the required formalities," Hancock said.

Before this legislation, there was no uniform federal self-

proving affidavit. Instead, legal assistance attorneys searched for appropriate state provisions for the client.

This new law will establish a single self-proving affidavit for legal assistance clients' wills.

It is a special alternative to different state requirements and should better assure the client that a probate court will accept the will. Also, this should reduce the likelihood that the surviving family member would experience difficulties probating the will. This is one less problem to deal with while grieving.

Under the new law, a military testamentary instrument should be admitted to probate in state court proceedings without additional witnesses or affidavits.

This does not mean a will cannot be challenged. "It is still subject to contest on grounds such as undue influence, lack of testamentary capacity or prior revocation," Hancock said.

Existing wills are not affected by this change — a valid will remains valid.

Hancock stresses that it is important for service members to not wait until they are deploying to make decisions on their estate plans. Soldiers should



SGT Charles Story

The march at White Sands Missile Range is open to military and civilian teams and individuals in either heavy or light divisions.

discuss their estates with their families and visit installation legal assistance officers for help. — *AFPS*

White Sands, N.M.

Memorial March Remembers Bataan

THE 2001 Bataan Memorial Death March at White Sands Missile Range, N.M., will be conducted on April 1.

This is the 13th year for the popular march, which recognizes the sacrifices made by thousands of U.S. and Filipino service members captured by the Japanese in the Philippine Islands during World War II.

The 26.2-mile march starts on the missile range's main post, crosses hilly terrain, winds around a small mountain and returns to the finish line over sandy desert trails and through washes. The elevation varies from about 4,100 to 5,300 feet. While marathon length, the memorial march is not a sanctioned marathon.

The event is open to military (active duty, National Guard, Reserve, ROTC, JROTC or retired military) and civilian teams and individuals in either heavy or light divisions.

Military personnel marching in any military category must wear full field gear. Civilian marchers in any category should wear appropriate attire for a road march through desert terrain. All marchers entered in heavy division categories must also carry a 35-pound rucksack.

New team rules have been instituted for the 2001 march. Teams must consist of five people. All five marchers must cross the finish line together.

The team entry fee is \$100 for entries submitted by March 15. After that date, the price is \$125. The fee for individual marchers is \$25 if submitted by March 15 and \$35 after the deadline. Registered participants will receive a commemorative T-shirt, certificate, pre-event continental breakfast and post-event meal.

Information about team and individual categories, plus a registration packet for the 2001 Bataan Memorial Death March, can be found on the Internet at **www.wsmr.army.mil**. For general information about the march call the White Sands Missile Range Public Affairs Office at (505) 678-1134. Questions and comments also may be e-mailed to **bataan@wsmr.army.mil**. — *WSMR PAO*

Insurance Update

SGLI Benefits to Increase

THE Veterans Benefits and Health Care Improvement Act of 2000 increased by \$50,000 the maximum coverage under the Servicemen's Group Life Insurance to \$250,000.

The military-designed term insurance benefit was last increased by \$100,000 to \$200,000 in 1992, said Tom Tower, an actions officer for the office of the assistant directorate of compensation, office of the undersecretary of defense.

The increase in insurance reflects the rising cost of living expenses incurred during the last decade, Tower said.

The SGLI increase should take effect April 1, Tower said, emphasizing that more detailed information is expected. — *Army News Service*

Alexandria, Va.

Armed Forces Vacation Club Raises Rates

DESPITE a January price increase, the Armed Forces Vacation Club still offers good value for service members and other authorized users, averaging just over \$33 per night at top resorts worldwide. It also sends commission income to the service member's home installation.

In January, rates for a seven-night stay increased to \$234. That increase means installation nonappropriated funds will receive a commission of \$22 for each booking by an authorized user from that installation. Service members and their family members, retired military, Department of Defense civilian employees and their family members are all eligible to use the service.

AFVC offers those custom-

ers reduced rates for off-season reservations at resorts around the world. Cendant Corporation runs the club, with oversight from the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center, headquarters for the Army's morale, welfare and recreation programs.

The club began with a 10-month test in the National Capital Area and was extended to all stateside locations in August 1999.

Since its start, the club has accepted almost 5,800 reservations, from which it paid about \$115,500 in commissions to DOD nonappropriated funds. About 3,000 of those reservations were made by Army personnel, resulting in \$58,000 to Army MWR funds.

Program information, including condominiums available worldwide, can be found on the Army's leisure travel website, www.offdutytravel.com. From the site, click on "Great Travel

Deals," scroll down to the Armed Forces Vacation Club, and click on the logo. This will bring up a page that explains

the program with additional links to the AFVC website. Click on "Available Resorts" and then select a state or country to check

TRICARE News

TRICARE Prime Remote Open for Family Members

FAMILIES of active-duty service members serving in areas far from a military base and its medical facilities will soon be eligible for a new program that cuts their healthcare costs.

The fiscal 2001 National Defense Authorization Act provides for TRICARE Prime Remote for Family Members to begin Oct. 1. Active-duty members in locations more than 50 miles from a military medical treatment facility have had TRICARE Prime Remote since Oct. 1, 1999. Their families, however, are covered under TRICARE Standard.

Coast Guard Lt. Cmdr. Robert Styron, a regional operations officer for the TRICARE Management Activity, said the legislation also includes a "waive charges" clause to provide some interim relief until TRICARE Prime Remote for Family Members debuts.

Styron said the clause isn't in effect yet because officials are still working out program details. In the meantime, he advised family members in remote areas to keep all their receipts for copayments, cost shares and deductibles.

"They may be reimbursed when the details are worked out," he said.

TRICARE Prime Remote is similar to civilian health-maintenance organizations and preferred-provider plans. Beneficiaries use participating healthcare providers and pay relatively low copayments and no deductibles.

TRICARE Prime Remote for Family Members will affect the families of roughly 80,000 active-duty service members, including recruiters, ROTC instructors and staff, and Training-With-Industry program participants. The new family member program will offer the same copayment schedule as TRICARE Prime — much lower than TRICARE Standard.

Styron said the new program responds to families' complaints about being ordered to remote areas where TRICARE Standard is their only military healthcare option. He acknowledged healthcare can be fairly costly using TRICARE Standard.

Families object because their medical care would be free if they were on a base or in a catchment area, Styron said.

TRICARE officials are still ironing out enrollment details, but expect to publicize steps before Oct. 1. Styron said individuals can make the process easier when the time comes by ensuring their information in the Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System is current and accurate. — AFPS



The Vacation Club's website offers details on transportation, lodging and a wealth of other travel-related information.

on current availability. The site is updated every morning by the Cendant staff.

To make a reservation, call toll-free (800) 724-9988; give the AFVC account number (7033-00000) to the operator and then book the condominium selected from the website. The reservation must be paid for at the time of booking, using a major commercial credit card. — *U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center PAO*

Washington

Army Sets Rotation Plan for Service in Balkans

THE Army recently announced which active and reserve forces

will see service in Bosnia and Kosovo through May 2005.

The announcement provides predictability for soldiers and units to ensure they are given adequate time to train for the mission, said Army spokesman MAJ Tom Artis. The rotation plan also provides better linkages between the active and reserve forces, mitigates the effects of high operational tempo and better sustains the Army's overall levels of readiness for contingency operations, he said.

Units supporting the six-month SFOR rotations 9 through 16 are:

SFOR 9 (April-October 2001): 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, Ga.; 48th Inf. Brigade,



Soldiers of the Texas Guard's 49th Armd. Div. are among the reserve-component troops to have served in Bosnia.

Service Academies

RC Members Can Request Academy Nominations

NATIONAL Guard and Reserve members can now apply to send their sons and daughters to military service academies via presidential nomination.

The initiative, part of the fiscal 2001 National Defense Authorization Act signed by President Clinton last October, covers reserve-component members with eight or more years of active-duty service or members who have qualified for a non-regular retirement, said Charles L. Cragin, principal deputy under secretary of defense for reserve affairs.

The president has the authority to nominate 100 individuals to each of the service academies each year. Previously, only children of active-duty people were eligible for such nominations.

"I like to say that if you're in the military, active or reserve component, you are 'twice the citizen,'" Cragin said. "You have the benefits of being a citizen, and so you always have the ability to go to your member of Congress and ask them to consider a nomination.

"But, now, if you are in the military, active or reserve, and have eight or more years of active duty in the aggregate, you can also seek to have the president nominate your son or daughter," he added.

"A lot of reserve-component members have considerable active-duty service, and, in fact, it continues to increase because we're calling up these men and women," he said. "They're serving in Kosovo, or Bosnia or Southwest Asia. And so, they're accumulating more and more active duty." — *AFPS*

Georgia Army National Guard; and the Arkansas Guard's 39th Inf. Bde.

SFOR 10 (October 2001-April 2002): 29th Inf. Div., Virginia Guard; 155th Armored Bde., Mississippi Guard; and units from the Texas Guard's 49th Armd. Div.

SFOR 11 (April-October 2002): 25th Inf. Div., Schofield Barracks, Hawaii; 116th Cavalry Bde., Idaho Guard; 76th Inf. Bde., Indiana Guard; and units from the Minnesota Guard's 34th Inf. Div.

SFOR 12 (October 2002-April 2003): 28th Inf. Div., Pennsylvania Guard; and the South Carolina Guard's 218th Inf. Bde.

SFOR 13 (April-October 2003): 35th Inf. Div., Kansas Guard.

SFOR 14 (October 2003-April 2004): 34th Inf. Div., Minnesota Guard.

SFOR 15 (April-October 2004): 38th Inf. Div., Indiana Guard.

SFOR 16 (October 2004-April 2005): 42nd Inf. Div., New York Guard.

Units supporting six-month KFOR rotations 3A to 6B will be drawn primarily from the active force:

KFOR 3A (June-November 2001): 101st Airborne Div., Fort Campbell, Ky.

KFOR 3B (November 2001-May 2002): 10th Mountain Div., Fort Drum, N.Y.

KFOR 4A (May-November 2002): Units from V Corps, headquartered in Heidelberg, Germany.

KFOR 4B (November 2002-May 2003): V Corps units.

KFOR 5A (May-November 2003): 4th Inf. Div., Fort Hood, Texas.

KFOR 5B (November 2003-May 2004): 1st Cav. Div., Fort Hood.

KFOR 6A (May-November 2004): 3rd Inf. Div.

KFOR 6B (November 2004-May 2005): 101st Abn. Div. — *ARNEWS*